

Boston Celtic Forward

# Bill Sharman



presents **FINE**

**POINTS**

**OF**

**BASKETBALL**

**SHOOTING**



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**L**ike the slugger in baseball or the halfback who runs for the touchdowns in football, the player who can put the ball in the basket wins the cheers on the basketball court.

No matter how well your team can work plays, pass, dribble, or handle the ball, you won't win any games unless you have players who can shoot with accuracy.

I'm Bill Sharman of the Boston Celtics. I want to discuss with you the things that make a good shooter.

It goes without saying that, to improve your shooting by trying out some of the tips I'm going to tell about, you've got to have a place to practice. If you have a regulation basket set up on your garage, or some place else at home, and the weather's right for outdoor practice, you're in business. Maybe you live near a school which has outdoor basketball courts. In any event, you have to wangle the use of a ball and a basket, and if you want to learn badly enough, you'll find a way.



**Fig. 1**



**Left hand is "shelf"**



**Weight evenly distributed**

Before going into the various types of shots you should learn, I want to warn you that the only way to improve your shooting is to practice each type of shot many times. There just isn't any drill that will substitute for many, many hours of practice.

If you are willing to practice each shot as many as a hundred times a day, I feel sure this article will help you.

Have your dad read this article, too. He can be your coach and see that you do the shots correctly. Only when you learn to shoot right can continuous practice help you improve.

All good shooters have two things in common. They have the ability to be perfectly relaxed and, at the same time, to concentrate on putting the ball through the hoop.

With this in mind, let's study the various shots and when they are most effective.



## One-Hand Set Shot

The one-hand set has become the most effective outside shot in basketball. I prefer the right-hand set whenever possible, but you should learn to use either hand.

I place the ball on my left hand, with fingers spread, and use this hand as a guide and "shelf." My right hand, also with fingers spread, is placed on the back of the ball, but slightly toward the top. I raise the ball to eye level with the "shelf" hand about ten inches from my face. My knees are slightly bent, weight evenly distributed. My back is straight, head up, one foot forward, and eyes on the rim of the basket (Fig. 1).

As I straighten up from the crouch, the shelf hand brings the ball back to rest on my relaxed right hand and wrist. I push the ball to the full extension of my right arm toward the basket, dropping the shelf hand off the ball. The weight of my body shifts forward as I reach the full extension of my

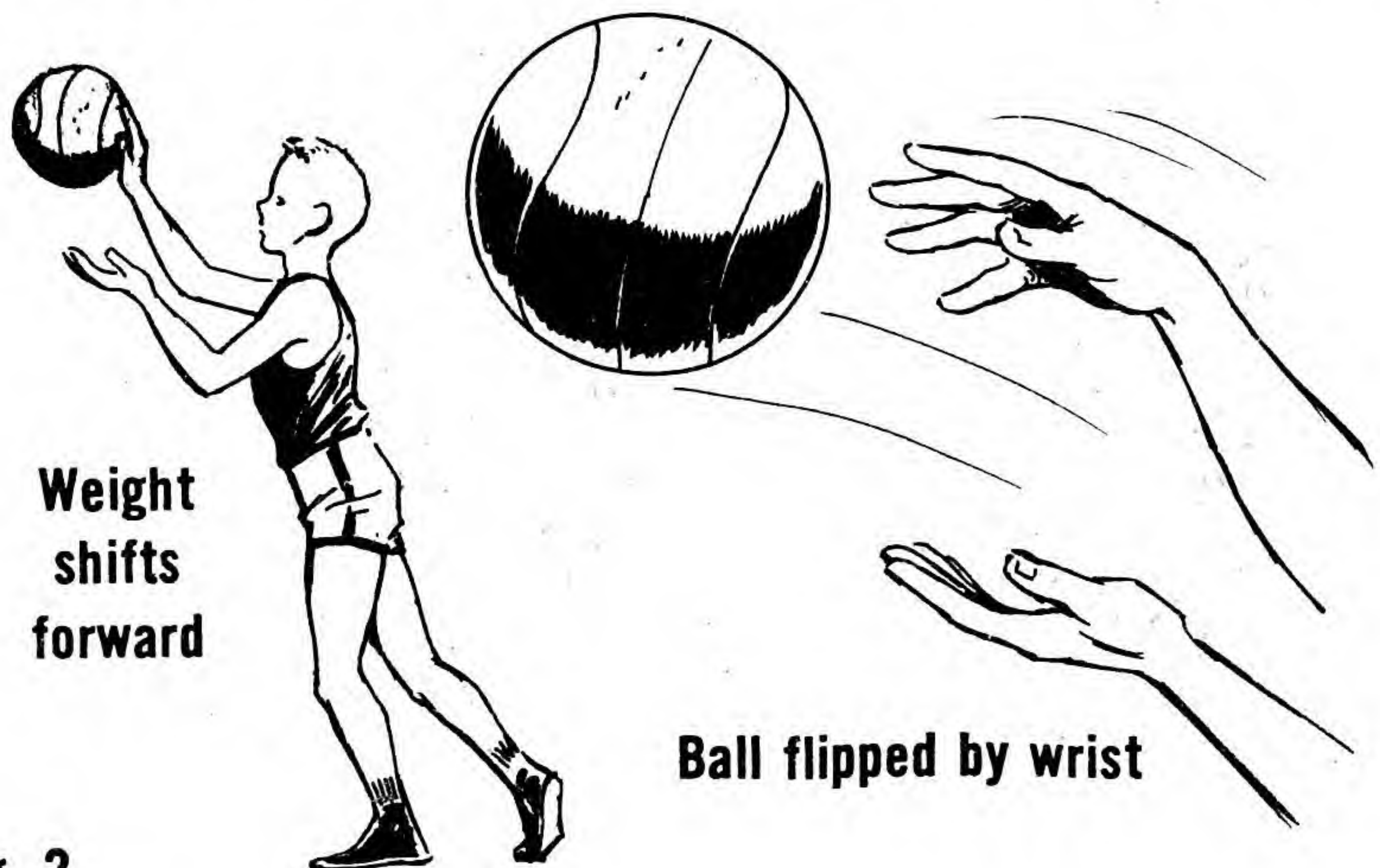


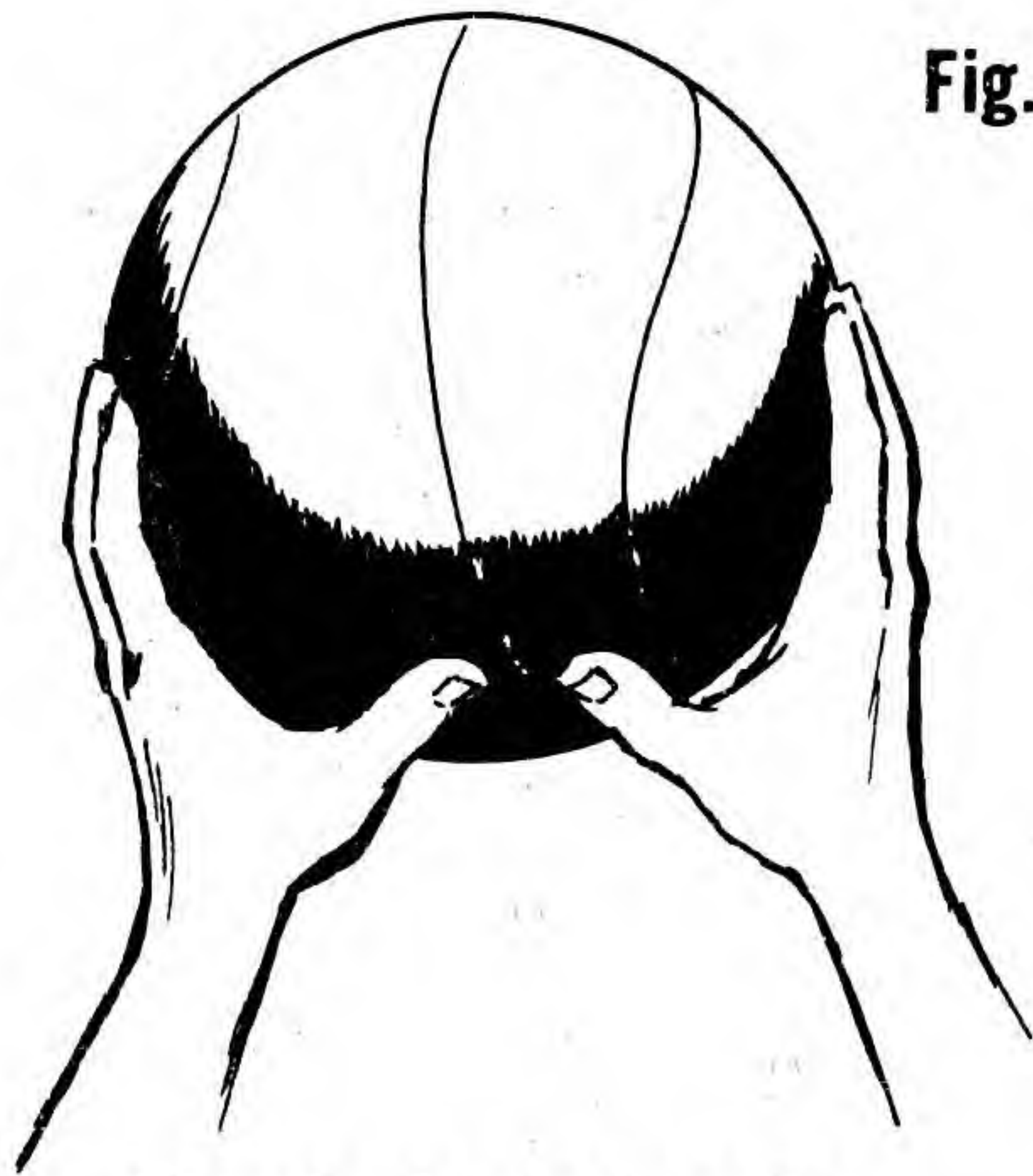
Fig. 2



**Fig. 3**



**Two-hand  
set shot**



**Thumbs toward center**

arm. Then I finish the shot with a relaxed, soft flip of the wrist and fingers (Fig. 2).

There should be a moderate arch on the shot to give the ball every opportunity to enter the hoop. A hard shot with low arch will bounce out, but a soft one has a chance to bounce off the rim through the net. Remember, push the ball; don't throw it. With practice, you can execute it with quickness and amazing accuracy.

## **Two-Hand Set Shot**

A two-hand set is more accurate when you're shooting from far out on the court. It's useful behind a screen set up by a teammate, too. Many players use it against a defense that falls back close to the basket. Some players prefer to have their feet together when they shoot it, but I usually have one foot slightly forward.

The ball is held in both hands, with fingers spread on each side, but favoring the lower half of the ball. The thumbs



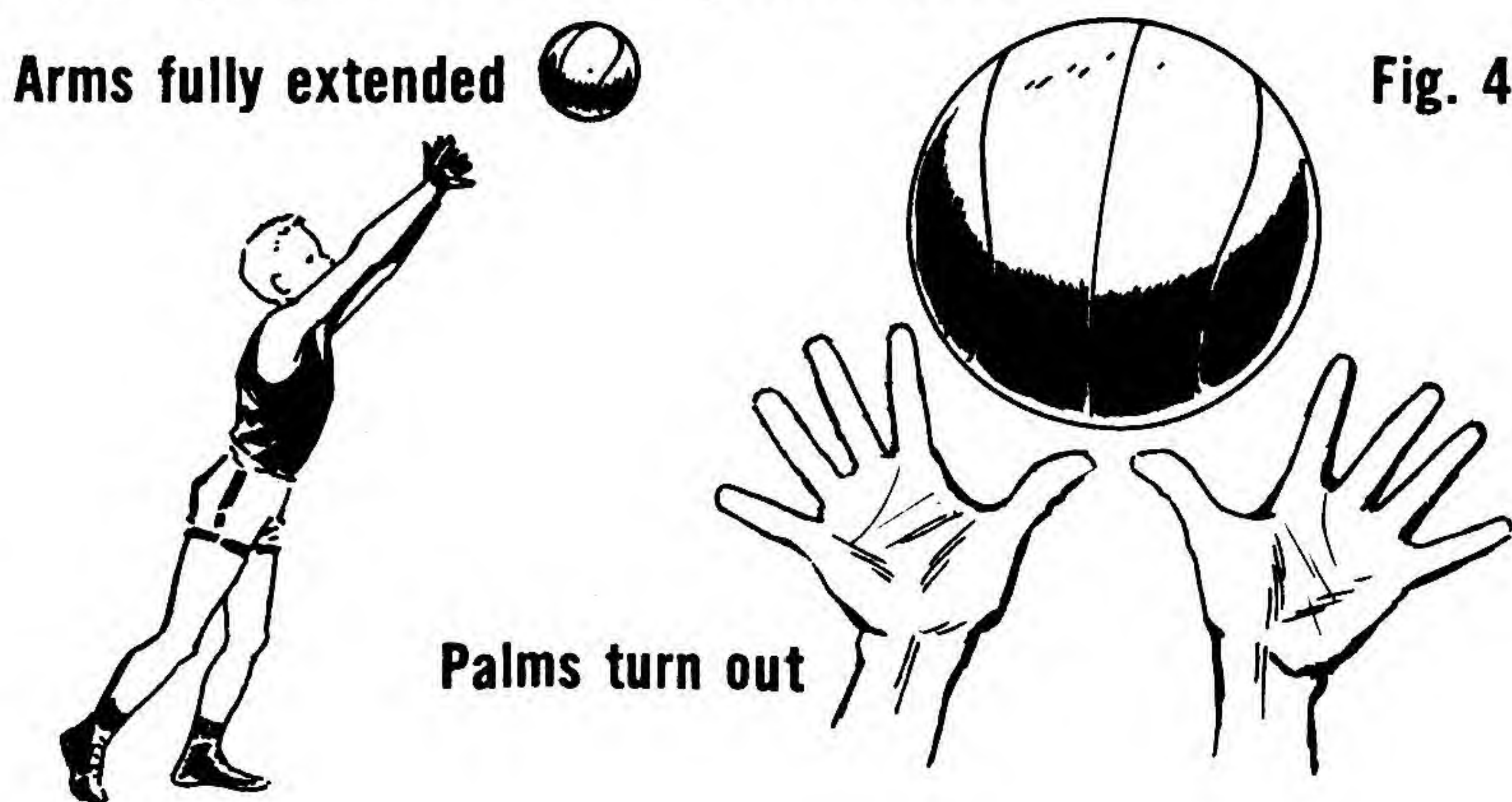
are spread in toward the center of the ball and, at times, may nearly touch each other.

Your head should be up, eyes on the basket, elbows bent and close to your sides. You should be perfectly relaxed in a semicrouch (Fig. 3). Now you're ready to shoot. The important thing again is the full extension of the arms outward and upward past your eyes and toward the rim. Your knees straighten and your weight shifts to a slight angle forward and upward as the arms do the same. The palms of each hand should turn outward at the completion of your shot (Fig. 4).

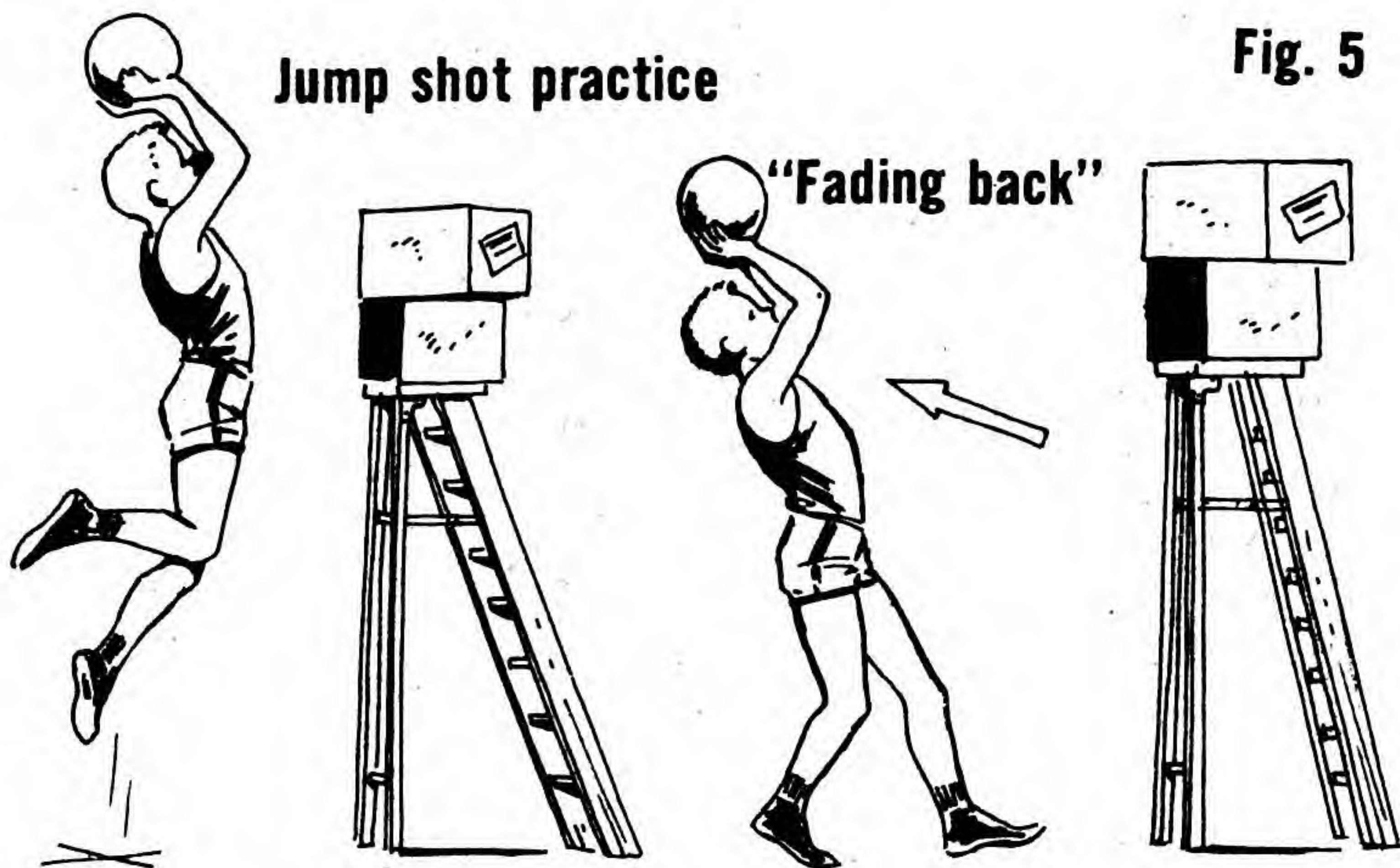
## **Jump Shot**

The jump shot (Fig. 5) has become a big offense weapon in basketball, because it is difficult to block. Unlike the set shot, this one is often taken with a defensive man right on top of you.

The object is to get above the defender, letting the ball go with a relaxed flip of the wrist when you are at the peak of your jump, with arm fully extended.







The ball is held as in other one-hand shots, but the shot normally is not made holding the ball in front of you. Instead, with a crowding defensive man, it is necessary to start the shot above your head, sometimes to the side, and even to the rear. The farther back or to the side you can start the shot, the tougher it will be to block. A player who can develop a good jump shot that starts from these positions is almost impossible to stop.

Another feature of this shot is that it fits in with the trend toward the fast break in basketball. Usually, it's taken from a run, so you must practice coming to a semistop with one foot forward. Make sure you can take the shot without taking steps. Spring straight up to avoid running into the defensive man. After you've learned the shot going straight up, try it fading backward. The angle of your jump, of course, will depend on the position of the defensive man.

If you can perfect a jump shot that you can get into the basket a fair percentage of the time, you can be a big



asset to any basketball team. Get dad out of his easy chair to pass to you as you run toward the basket. Practice stopping quickly and jumping as high as you can before launching the shot. If you can get one of your friends to act as a defensive player, it will help you develop this ability. However, in a pinch, the family stepladder can substitute. Place the ladder in one spot and practice coming to a quick stop in front of it, then jumping high up to get off the shot. If the ladder isn't high enough, pile a couple of cartons on top of it.

## **Hook Shot**

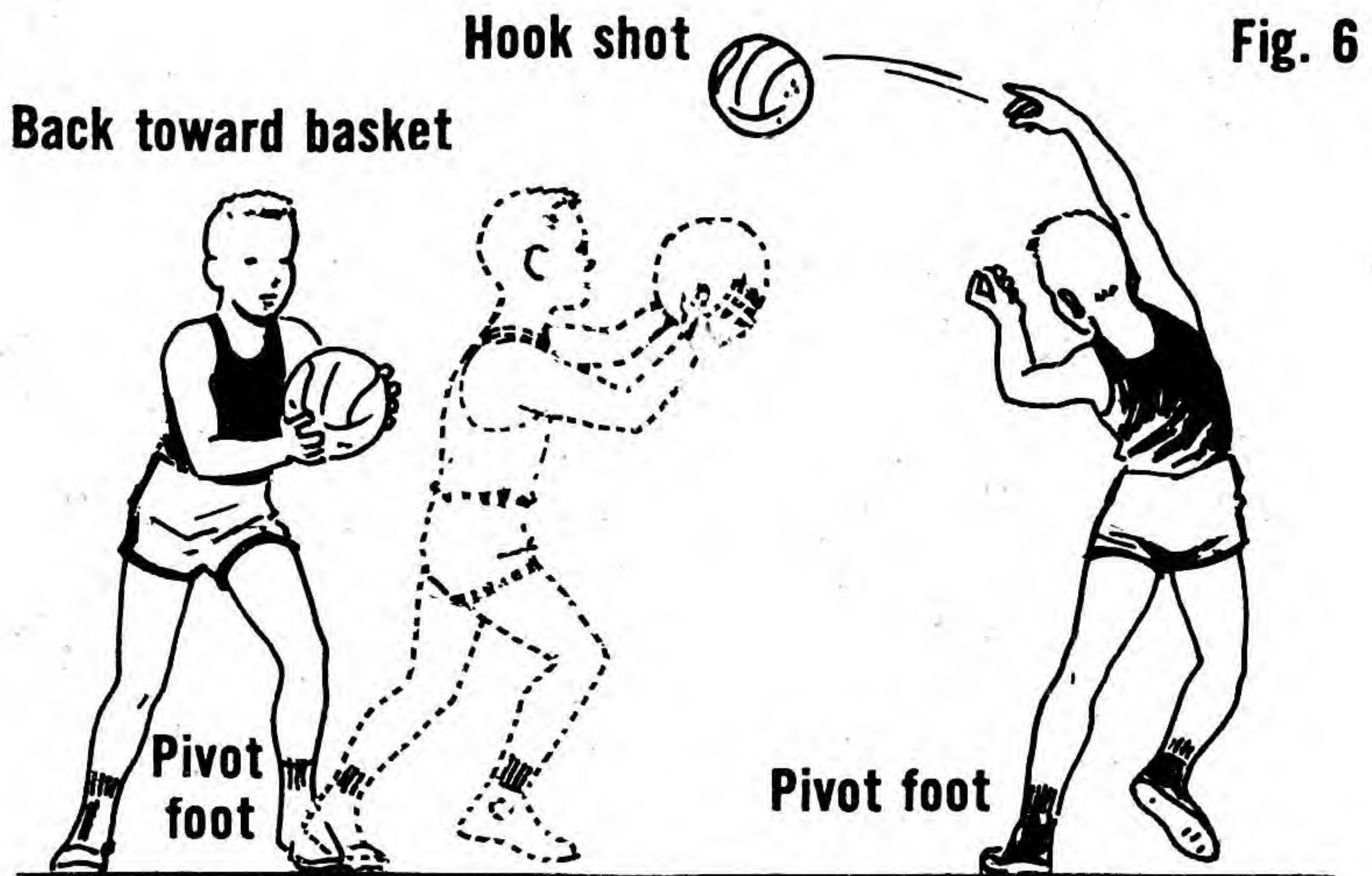
The hook is one of many shots you should learn with either hand. Most of the players who have perfected the hook shot are big men, like Bob Houbregs, but I've seen little Johnny O'Brien, now a baseball star, use it effectively. It's a great shot to develop, because you can keep your body between the defensive man and the ball, making it another shot tough to defend against.

Although your back is toward the basket on a hook shot, you must focus your eye on the basket as soon as you are ready to begin your shot. Hold the ball in both hands and move away from your opponent. Sometimes you'll dribble first, but it's a good idea to learn to hook with either hand and be able to take off on either foot (Fig. 6).

Bring the ball up with both hands. On a right-hand hook, the left hand is on top as the shelf and guiding hand, with the right underneath. For the left-hand hook, the hands are reversed.

The basic rules are the same as for other shots, with the full extension of the arm as you turn to face the basket. Don't





let go of the ball until your arm is extended fully upward and toward the basket. The longer you keep the guiding hand on the ball, the more accurate you'll be in your shot.

I always like to use the backboard whenever possible on a hook. Of course, when you're parallel to the basket, or directly in front of it, you can't use the board. Practice will show you the exact spot on the board you must hit to make the ball go through the hoop. It's a good idea to mark the spot from a certain position with a chalk or some tape and practice until you can hit the mark every time.

## **The Lay-Up Shot**

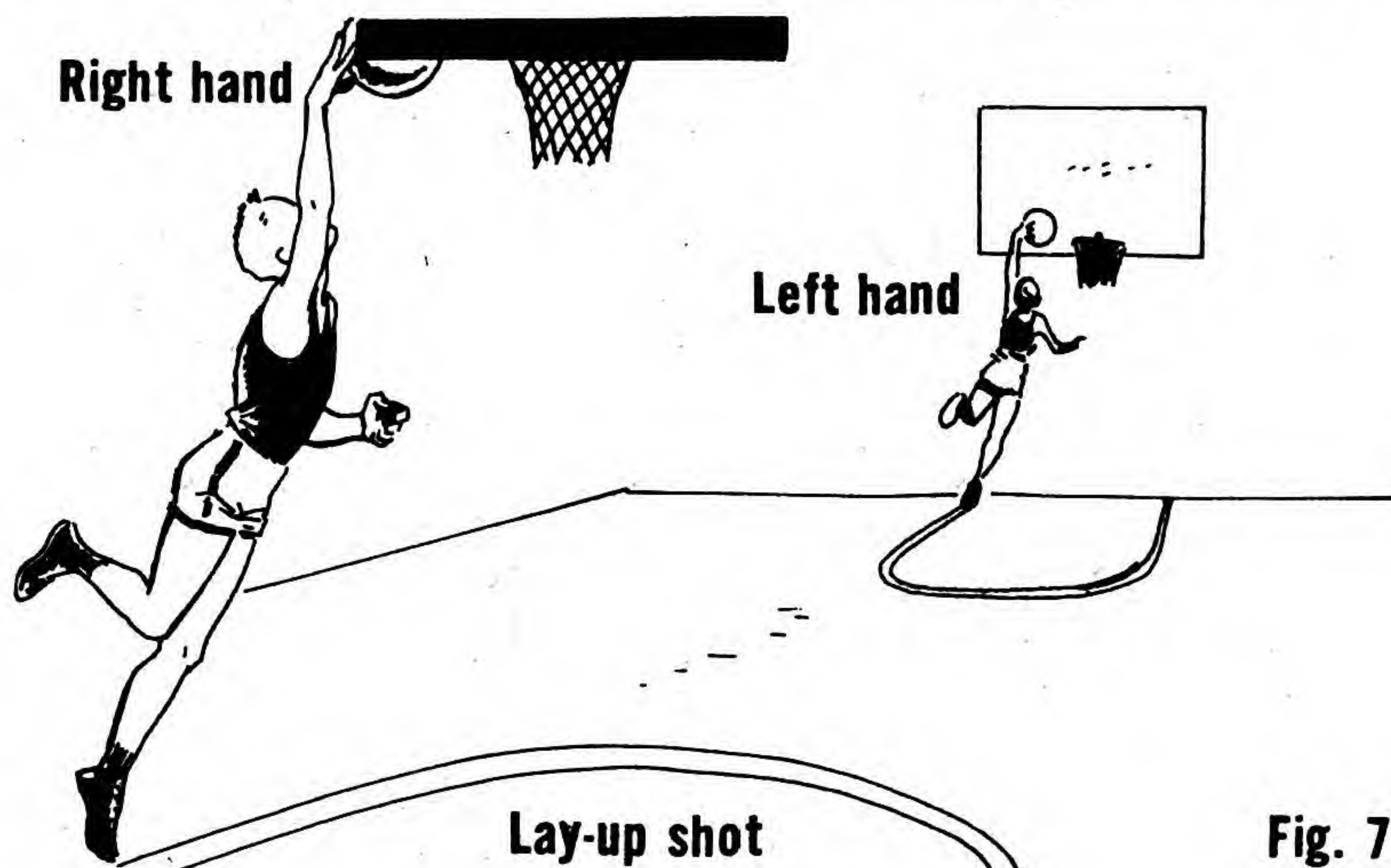
This is the one shot you must learn never to miss. The lay-up is the only 100 percent shot in basketball. A missed lay-up can shake the confidence of your team. A lay-up is usually missed because the shooter takes his eyes off the spot directly above the basket, does not fully extend his arm, or flips the ball instead of laying it on the board.



You must learn to shoot this shot with either hand. When you come in from the right side, it must be done with the right hand. Just as the name implies, the lay-up is made by placing the ball on the backboard with full extension of your arm. Keep your head up, with eyes on the board directly above the basket.

On a right-hand shot, take off with the left foot, using your body as a shield against your opponent. Your jump is a high jump, not a broad jump. Release the ball at the peak of your jump, twisting your body slightly for protection (Fig 7). Don't put extra spin on the ball. There's a tendency for the ball to spin out of the basket if this is done.

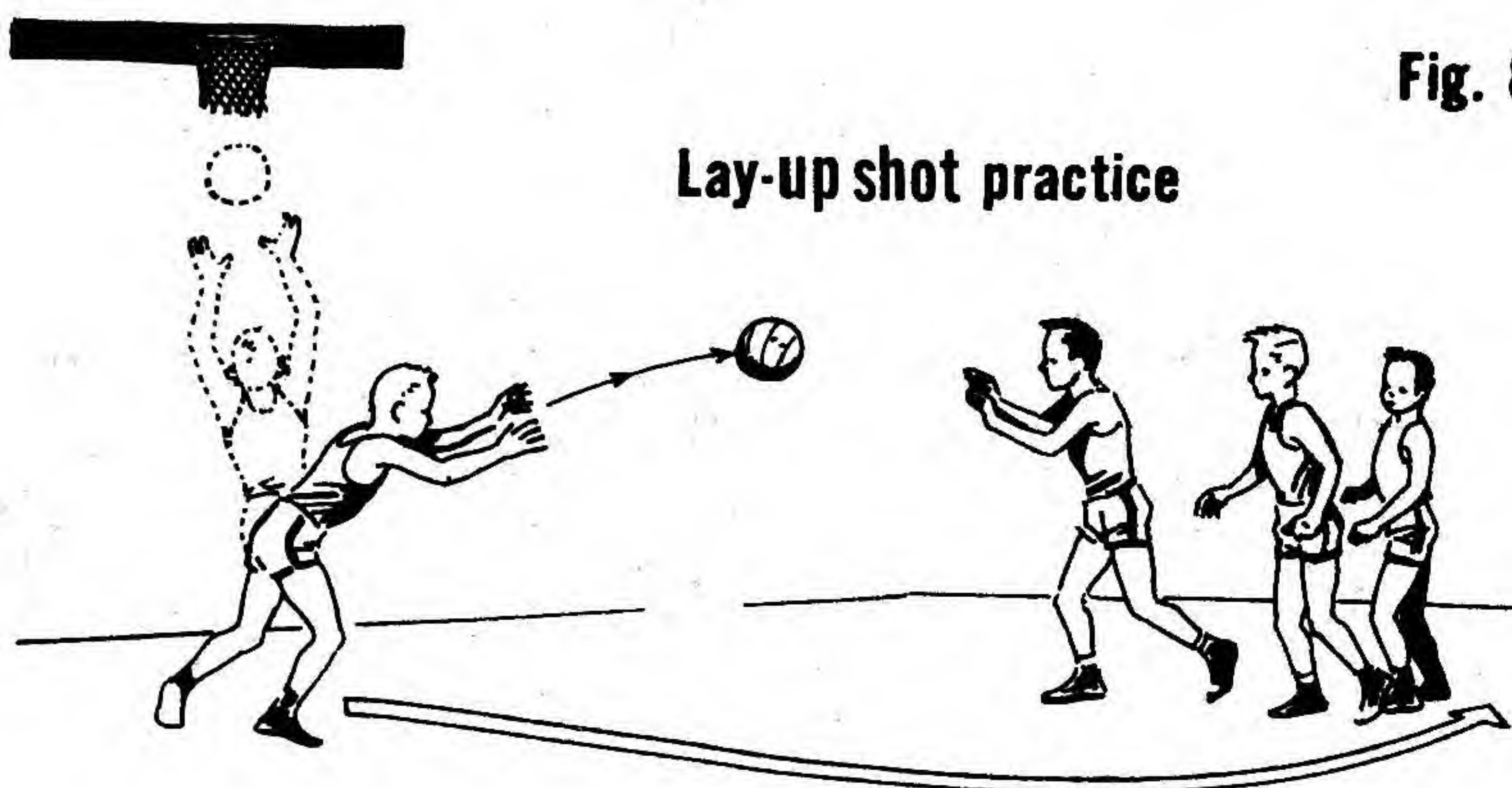
There's a simple drill (Fig. 8) that will help you and your gang learn to make the lay-up while driving as hard as you can go. All but one of you form a line to the right of the free-throw line. The other boy should be under the basket for the rebound. The first boy in line dribbles in for a lay-up.



**Fig. 7**



**Fig. 8**



**Lay-up shot practice**

The rebounder takes the ball and passes to the next one running in toward the basket. He then goes to the end of the line for his turn.

## **Free Throws**

Don't make the mistake of ignoring free throw practice. With officiating becoming closer every year, many games are won on free throws. The player who can be depended on to make a big percentage of his "charity tosses" is a real scoring threat.

I have been fortunate in being able to make a large percentage of my free throws, but it took long hours of practice at the free-throw line. I believe the big reason for my success is the fact that I execute a free throw almost exactly like I do my set shot.

I take a deep breath before tossing the ball and concentrate on obtaining a perfect balance of the ball in my hands along with the balance of my body. This is something I can't do at all times from the field, because of the aggressiveness of the defense.



To sum up, you can become a better-than-average basket shooter if you remember these things:

1. Be relaxed, but concentrate on putting the ball in the basket.
2. Extend your arms completely in a pushing motion on each shot.
3. The jump shot and the hook shot are the most difficult to master, but also the most difficult to stop. Practice them religiously.
4. Practice lay-up shots from both sides of the basket until they become so automatic you never miss.
5. Always be a good sport.

**This is one of a series of booklets by champions on the fine points of sports. Be sure to collect the entire series, and for more fine points, follow your **76 Sports Club** on ABC television.**



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